

Resistance

Number 3 Summer '95

Bulletin of the Irish Anarchist Communist Federation

PLAYING THE PEACE GAME

ON WEDNESDAY 10TH of May a delegation from Sinn Fein travelled to Stormont Castle to meet with NIO Political Development Minister, Michael Ancram. Martin McGuinness claimed that their presence at the meeting was intended to represent "The views of the Sinn Fein electorate ... which will shape the future of Ireland and the Irish people".

On the government side Michael Ancram declared that "We are in a new situation which will require new ideas and a new boldness to resolve. We want to explore with Sinn Fein how they can see their stated desire to take the gun out of Irish politics become a reality."

There are gains and losses to be made on both sides. Sinn Fein is desperate to be seen to be playing the social-democratic game. They need to have their electoral mandate recognised by the British in order to be included in any future negotiations. They stand to gain credibility in the eyes for those at home and abroad. The fact that open US fundraising can take place is one indication of their growing acceptance among mainstream politics. Now that they are entering the area of compromise and negotiation, their standing among floating voters may increase. Many voters may now vote Sinn Fein due to their involvement in bringing about the ceasefire, their democratic negotiations with the government and their talk of "demilitarisation" and "parity of esteem". Gone is the talk of "socialism" that once made them seem so radical and which once appealed to left-Republicans. Gone is the idea of "co-ordination of all forms of resistance to the plight faced by workers at the present time".

On the other hand they have to keep good relations with the Sinn Fein rank and file. To stop them from becoming alienated in a sea of political jargon and bureaucratic babble the emphasis is now placed on street demos, campaigns,

protests, pickets and marches in order to keep militancy in check. As long as dissatisfaction with the peace process can be channelled by the Sinn Fein leadership then the chances of dissent among grass-roots Republicans is significantly reduced.

Sinn Fein's eagerness to play the democratic game with the British government can be seen in the tension created by the recent clashes in Derry when John Major was temporarily "discouraged" from visiting. It was embarrassing for the respectable Sinn Fein leadership to see their supporters fighting with the cops! We certainly don't sympathise with the cops, but for an organisation like Sinn Fein, which is negotiating with the British government, it is a setback for their carefully tailored image of a bone fide democratic party. But again Sinn Fein had to side with their supporters to avoid any internal conflict. This attempt to keep a balance between their grass-roots and the government is a risky endeavour and one that is vitally important to Sinn Fein's future.

As for the British government; they are still in the long-term process of reaching a final agreement on the future of the North as a preliminary to disengaging. In the short term they have to reach an accommodation with Sinn Fein, especially on the decommissioning of IRA arms. As Michael Ancram said after the three hour dialogue: "We are not pursuing a single issue agenda. We have made clear our readiness to discuss a wide range of issues. But nor can we ignore the particular issue of decommissioning."

It appears that some of the impetus generated by the peace process is being lost and that the issue of decommissioning is a stumbling block in the negotiations. It gives the government some time to pacify the outraged Unionist parties. However, the climate in loyalist communities has



changed to a notable degree. For example, when it was announced that Sinn Fein was to hold talks with a government minister, East Belfast was not reduced to a grinding halt. Of course there were the usual bad-tempered reactions from the Official Unionists and the DUP, but for the moment the focus is definitely on Sinn Fein's relationship with the government.

The British government is also attempting a balancing act. Their relationships with the Unionists and the Republicans must be conducted carefully. In the end however, they must leave behind a peaceful Six Counties. Indeed, the present process is benefiting the Conservative PM as his part in the ceasefire and subsequent negotiations is his only success to date. The processed peace is a boost to his political survival.

As anarchist-communists we see little to be excited about in these discussions. While we obviously welcome the fact that people are not being killed, we see this process as an essentially futile one. Despite whatever settlement is reached, there will still be a capitalist society in operation. Capitalism is a system where a ruling-class of property owning individuals control the

wealth of the world, the wealth that is created by you and I: the working-class. This system relies on exploitation and oppression with the State acting in the ruling-classes' interests. That means keeping the working-class pacified, neutralised and apathetic. If that fails and we try and change our system by extra-parliamentary means then the State will use force against us.

A thirty-two county capitalist Ireland would rely on this system as it is impossible to break away from the grip of international capitalism. Sinn Fein cannot achieve this (even if they wanted to) and armed cliques like the so-called "Marxist" INLA can't bring about socialism because the unsanctioned actions of their group leave the vast majority of workers divorced from the struggle.

We in the IACF believe in creating a society based on equality and freedom. We believe in smashing the state and replacing it with a federated system of community and industrial councils that will deal with the everyday problems of society. These councils will be peopled with instantly recallable delegates that are made up from their own communities and workplaces.

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HEALTH WORKER STRIKES

ON 24-28TH APRIL over 100 workers in Lisburn and Downpatrick went on strike to save their jobs from the proposed 500 cuts.

At Downshire Hospital staff stand to lose their productivity bonuses which will mean cuts in wages of between £10-17 a week. Other workers will face cuts in their pensions.

The lowest paid staff in the hospitals are the ones who face the most sacrifices while Trust managers have not lost their bonus payments.

Strikers at Lagan Valley Hospital engaged in a four day strike against the Trust. During the dispute workers

from postmen to refuse collectors to milkmen refused to cross the picket line whilst still allowing essential items through.

Scabs were employed by management but they soon fell foul of the strikers who identified 22 of them and displayed their names on a placard outside!

The above disputes are but a few among the everyday struggles that go on throughout the North. Many of them never reach the news or local media. We are really encouraged by the level of solidarity and militancy that is blooming among workers in Ireland.



ACF PROTEST AGAINST PRIVATE NURSING HOME

AN IACF MEMBER from Newcastle Co. Down has been involved in a protest against the development of a green field site for an old peoples' home. There would not be the need for this (private) nursing home if the government had not closed down an old peoples' home literally yards from the proposed development site. If this wasn't bad enough, the site sits between two rows of houses and the proposed building is three stories high. A lot of local residents did not receive notification from the planning department. This shows a blatant disregard for peoples' comfort and needs. This is reflected in the building of a private home which will cater only for those who can afford it. The working class people who have to rely on a meagre state pension will be left to fend for

themselves. This again shows that Capitalism does not care and is based on profit not need.

If any further campaigns arise the IACF will be involved fighting for the rights of the working class people. There is no point in relying on your MP; if you want to change something, do it yourself. The solidarity of the working class is more powerful than a letter with a politician's name at the bottom,



HIDDEN HISTORY

IRELAND HAS NEVER been regarded as a hotbed of working-class militancy. All too often the focus has been on the actions of Loyalists and Republicans and the sectarian conflict has overshadowed the few instances of workers unity that have occurred throughout the 20th century.

We feel that as class struggle anarchists it is part of the revolutionary process to publicise our true history: not our history as Nationalists or Unionists, but as oppressed workers.

A major landmark in Irish working-class history is the 1932 Outdoor Relief Strike in Belfast, in which people from the Falls and the Shankill fought together against the Unionist government and the police.

When the Wall Street Crash occurred, Northern Ireland's economy was hit harder than most countries as its principal industries felt the effects of America's financial instability.

100,000 people in the North lost their jobs. Only 42,710 were receiving benefits and the rest had to survive on partial benefits or nothing at all. Many thousand who were unemployed were simply not registered.

Due to the poverty (which hit the working-class of Belfast hardest of all) outbreaks of TB were commonplace and basic

items like food, clothes and fuel were in short supply.

Protest and organisation spread in both the North and the South of Ireland. In Belfast demands made by the Outdoor Relief Workers Committee for an increase in relief rates and abolition of task work were rejected by the Stormont government.

As a result a strike was called in October and on the third of that month 30,000 people went on the march.

On Wednesday the fifth the RUC attempted to block a march to the Lisburn Road Workhouse which failed as demonstrators entered the workhouse and began to disrupt its operation.

The Unionist government was surprised by the actions of their "loyal" workers who were openly in revolt. They attempted to come up with some paltry concessions which were rejected by the strikers. That night workers called a rent strike and lit bonfires all over the city.

On Tuesday the 11th the government banned a huge workers demonstration and then issued the RUC with rifles and brought in units from the army. Fighting broke out when police tried to break up the meeting and that night workers from the Falls and the Shankill fought side by side against the police. A Protestant called Baxter was shot dead while fighting beside fellow workers from the Falls. Barricades were built and the police redoubled their efforts to break the strike.

Unfortunately the tactic now employed by the Unionist establishment proved to be an effective one. They encouraged rumours of an IRA plot to destroy the Northern state. They effectively rekindled sectarianism and so laid the way for the defeat of the unemployed workers' movement.

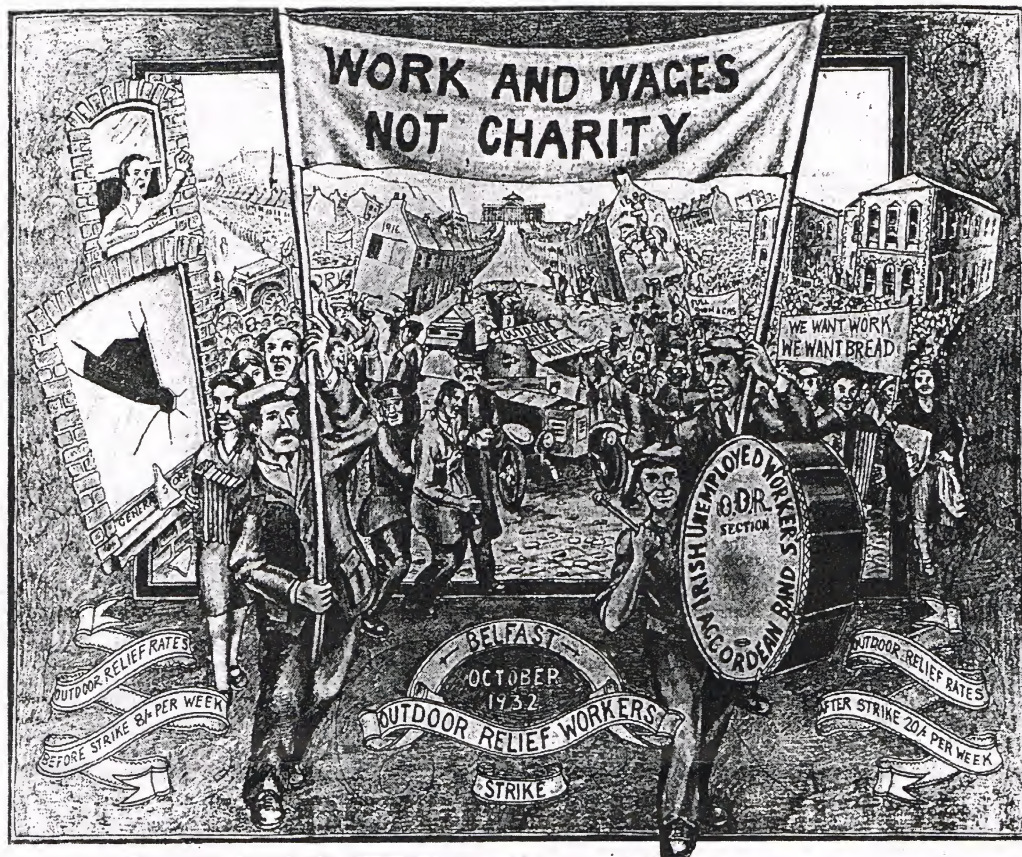
However, the strikers won big cash increases in relief pay and the city erupted

COME AGAIN?

WE IN THE IACF had a good chuckle at the following claim made by the British Sunday Times: apparently anarchists in Ireland have links with "outlawed loyalist paramilitary groups"! That's news to us! Black propaganda or what?

TRAVELLERS HARASSED IN COALISLAND

IN COALISLAND IN Co. Tyrone, the local council (Dunganon District Council) have been trying to catch a number of horses which have been grazing on council owned football fields in the town. The horses belong to a group of travellers who have been living in the area for several years now. The Council's justification for moving the horses on, is that the horses are damaging the football pitches and that they are posing a danger to children who are playing there. But where are the travellers supposed to graze their animals? Surely, if the council provided suitable ground for the travellers to graze their animals, then they wouldn't have to use football fields like these.



into celebrations as the strikers marked their victory over the government.

The working-class of Ireland has proved time and time again that they can overcome sectarian barriers and fight together as workers against the state and against the bosses.

The Irish Anarchist Communist Federation tries to keep this tradition alive by reminding people of the hidden history of Ireland.

With examples of class unity like this behind us the sky's the limit!

THE INFORMATION EXPLOSION THAT HASN'T HAPPENED

IN THIS DAY and age, the era of computers and information superhighways; governments and the ever increasing number of multi-national corporations are promising us much more openness, much more freedom of information. But where is it? The answer is we haven't got it! The government is being as secretive as ever even after the new freedom of Information Bill. A good example of this is that the Health Boards are required to inspect and assess homes for the elderly in much the same way the tourist board inspect Guest houses, but the only difference is that the Health Board doesn't give us any of the information, they just close one down if it really bad (usually the result of government cuts).

A further example would be when getting unemployment benefit you have to be "available for work" and genuinely "seeking

employment". These two phrases have no clear meaning so it may depend on where you live or who is dealing with your application for benefit. Apparently there are guidelines for civil servants to adhere to but we never get to see them. Even though they are written down somewhere. A Freedom of Information Bill is due in the Republic before Christmas, but will it exempt state agencies?

Surely we have the right to see the minutes of meetings of such boards and have access to their records. But the government knows best. They seem hellbent on

turning us into mindless robots who are incapable of thinking and just do as we are told by our benevolent bosses and therefore increase their profits.

Recent developments in the world of the Internet bear out our ideas on this matter. A bulletin board in Italy was raided by state authorities and the people who run it were charged with subversion and now face 7 to 15 years in prison. The State is not interested in giving its citizens true freedom of information. We are deluding ourselves if we think that our society is a free one.

ORGANISE!

Quarterly magazine of the ACF.
For a free sample copy, write to the address over the page.



Resistance

PLAYING THE PEACE GAME

From page 1

These delegates serve short periods in office to avoid building up an unwanted hierarchy and they are accountable to those who elected them. Thus ordinary people take charge of their own lives and the life of their community without parasite capitalists stealing the wealth that they create and without the state breathing down their necks.

This stateless, classless, free society is called libertarian communism, Sinn Fein and the Loyalists can play all the games they like with the various governments but society will still be populated by an exploited class and an exploiting class. The potential for revolution is one that can't be written off while capitalism is still functioning. No amount of peace processes can defuse the social tension that exists between us and our rulers.

This is where anarchists in the North have a role to play. We use every means to explain our ideas to our class and organise for revolution. To do this we need everyone's help. The IACF exists to promote revolutionary politics and to do this we need your help! Get involved!

SPREADING THE WORD!

THE FOLLOWING IS a reprinted letter sent in to the AndyTown News by the anarcho-syndicalist group "Organise!"

"You recently reported on the Workers Party conference at which John Lowry, their Belfast Regional Chairperson, called for a socialist agenda to oppose "both the blue and green conservatives".

But what is the alternative offered by the Workers Party?

One of the many variations on the social democratic theme, they can never achieve meaningful change for the working-class.

We need to start laying the foundations for a society administered on the basis of workplace and community control for need, not the profit of a few, by building organisations of and for the

working class now. Political parties such as the Workers Party can have no role to play in the creation of this, the only real alternative for the working class".

This is a sentiment we would definitely agree with! "Organise" are in the same tradition as ourselves: that of class struggle anarchism. Their politics are very similar to our own and they can be contacted at the Belfast address that can be found in this paper.



BOSSES SACK STRIKERS

IN MALLUSK BOSSES have again proved their attitude towards workers who go on strike for higher pay. Met Steel has been accused of sacking 11 strikers who had been taking part in the recent protest.

Pay Dyer of the GMB union said that the action was taken to force the company to increase the basic rate of pay. Met Steel offered 3.25% but their overall rate of pay is very low. The difference in pay between a worker at Mallusk and someone doing the same job at a different plant could amount to £40 a week.

Dyer added that "We did not want to take strike action but our members felt that this was the only way to get basic rates of pay increased". The GMB has been dragged unwillingly into further struggle with Met Steel by its members who have had enough of management attacks and low pay.

The struggle continues....

Just Send 5 first class stamps to receive the next five issues of RESISTANCE.

AXE TO FALL ON KILKEEL HOSPITAL

THE SOUTH HEALTH Board has decided to close the local hospital in Kilkeel. This will mean that statutory services will be centralised 20 miles away in Newry. Large amounts of community service work is being put out to the private sector.

50 jobs are also at risk. The Southern Health and Social Services Board has said it will "redeploy" workers but the prospects for these people looks as bleak for the prospects for the hospital itself.

Will Mourne people have to take to the streets once more in defence of the hospitals and clinics? If they do then IACF will be there arguing for direct action to save our hospitals and against reliance on bourgeois politicians and self-appointed committees and councils.

ANARCHISTS ON THE MARCH!

ON SATURDAY 6TH of May anarchists from Dublin, Galway, Belfast and other areas marched in Belfast as part of the (belated) May Day workers holiday. Despite the fact that the demo was overshadowed by the presence of union bureaucrat Arthur Scargill we still managed to represent Irish anarchism at the event.

Comrades from Organise!, the Frontline Collective (Galway) and the WSM (Dublin) were present and distributed papers and flyers highlighting our alternatives to bureaucratic trade unions, statism and reformism.

Interested in finding out more?

Contact IACF at
RESISTANCE,
c/o P.O.Box 505
BELFAST. BT11 9EG

WHO THE HELL ARE THE I.A.C.F?

IF YOU HAVE read this paper then you are probably asking that exact same question!

This paper is produced by the Irish Anarchist Communist Federation who are a group of revolutionary class-struggle anarchists who organise in all walks of life to try and inform people of our ideas.

We do this by producing papers, pamphlets and stickers with our positions clearly explained. We also attend meetings, demos and marches. We hold discussions with other anarchists and other socialists.

We believe that this society is based on exploitation and injustice and that the only way to change this is by revolution of the working-class. Unlike some other "socialists" or "communists" we don't seek leadership of the working-class. We exist to spread ideas not lead people.

We reject Trade Unions which don't exist to radically change society but exist to achieve a "fairer" form of oppression. They fail as defence organs of the working-class (sometimes!) while the union leadership invariably sabotage struggles to stop strikes "going out of control".

We reject the State as an oppressive force which is

controlled by the economic elite (capitalists) and which is against working-class people.

Finally we reject "national liberation" movements like the IRA which are not interested in fundamentally changing society, but are simply concerned with setting up a new capitalist State.

These are some of our basic ideas. They are elaborated further in our range of pamphlets and our magazine "Organise!".

We are part of the Anarchist Communist Federation which has members throughout England, Scotland and Wales. In Ireland we have members (who put out this paper) and contacts all over the country.

If you agree with what we have been saying then write to us and let us know! If you absolutely hate what we've been saying and would like to put us straight, then also write off! If you have any graphics, articles, letters or axes to grind then let us know. Needless to say this paper doesn't write itself for free so any donations you would like to make would be gratefully accepted!

Our task in Ireland is a difficult one. An uphill struggle like this needs as many forces that can be mustered. The class war has no ceasefire!